DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 122 505 EC 082 883

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TITLE The Relative Effects of Mainstreamed and Segregated Programs on the Primary Learning Disabled Students Acquisition of Reading Skills and Growth of Self Concept.
PUB DATE Apr 76
NOTE 5p.; Paper presented at the Annual International Convention, The Council for Exceptional Children (54th, Chicago, Illinois, April 4-9, 1976)

EDRS PRICE MF-$0.83 HC-$1.67 Plus Postage
DESCRIPTORS Exceptional Child Research; *Learning Disabilities; Primary Education; Reading Ability; *Reading Readiness; *Regular Class Placement; *Self Concept; *Special Classes

ABSTRACT

Compared were the effects of mainstream or special class placement on the acquisition of reading skills and self concept with a total of 84 kindergarten or first grade learning disabled students. Significant differences were found between the two groups on only one of the four tests given: the letter names subtest of the Murphy-Durrell Analysis. (DB)

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ED122505

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The Relative Effects of Mainstreamed and Segregated Programs on the Primary Learning Disabled Students Acquisition of Reading Skills and Growth of Self Concept

1. Statement of the Problem

Educators have come full circle in philosophy development and program implementation for exceptional children. Traditionally, segregated classes have been the most popular means for education children with learning disabilities. Research in the past decade has given unsatisfactory evidence for continuing the segregated classrooms. (Hoelke, 1966; Kirk, 1964)

This apparent lack of effectiveness along with identification concerns, effects of grouping, and changes in the organization of educational facilities has caused consideration of alternatives.

These alternatives are known as mainstream programs. Mainstreaming is, according to Berry (1974), philosophically the valuing of human differences. Programmatically, it is the education of the exceptional learner with his peers to whatever extent is compatible with his fullest development.

The purpose of this study was to determine the relative effects of the two programs on learning disabled students' acquisition of prerequisite reading skills and growth of self-concept.

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4. Analysis of the Data

The data was analyzed using the multivariate and univariate analyses of variance found in the Finn computation programs.

Mainstream students showed a significant pre- to post-test difference on these tests:

1. Visual-Motor Integration Test
2. Wepman Test of Auditory Discrimination

Segregated students showed a significant pre- to post-test difference on these tests:

1. Visual-Motor Integration Test
2. Wepman Test of Auditory Discrimination
3. Murphy-Durrell Analysis of Phonemes, Letter Names and Learning Rate Test

To show the relative effects of the two programs, the t-test was computed on the post-test mean scores. Significant difference was found only on one test:

Letter names sub-test of the Murphy-Durrell Analysis

A chi-square computation determined the relationship between teacher abservations and test scores. For both groups, a non-significant relationship was found.

5. Conclusions and Implications of the Study

The trend toward mainstreaming in primary schools makes it imperative to examine the available research carefully. The transferring of children from one environment to another should not proceed until research shows that this change will be more beneficial.

3. Methodology of this Study

Sixteen kindergarten and first grade classrooms in two school districts were selected for this study by socio-economic background and evidence of mainstream or segregated program. Mainstream students spent the reading instructional time in heterogeneous groups within the regular classrooms. Segregated students spent the reading instructional time in homogeneous groups within the segregated classrooms.

The original population consisted of 1,450 primary children. Two hundred and seventy-two children were identified as minimally learning disabled according to Myklebust's definition of adequate mental functioning and inadequate classroom functioning ability. Of the 272 minimally learning disabled students, 84 were matched by grade, sex and IQ for this study.

The following tests were given on a pre- and post-test basis to measure prerequisite reading skills and areas of self-concept.

Prerequisite Reading Skill	Test
visual motor integration	Visual Motor Integration Test
auditory discrimination	Wepman Test of Auditory Discrimination
identification of phonemes	Murphy-Durrell Analysis
identification of letters	Murphy-Durrell Analysis
learning rate	Murphy-Durrell Analysis

Self-Concept Areas	Test
personal self-concept	Primary Self-Concept Inventory
social self-concept	Primary Self-Concept Inventory
intellectual self-concept	Primary Self-Concept Inventory

Informal assessment was made with a teacher's checklist for prerequisite reading skills and self-concept areas. These observations were correlated with the standardized test instruments.

It was hypothesized that the segregated students would show a significant pre- to post-test score difference over the segregated students on prerequisite skills measures and that mainstream students would show a significant pre- to post-test score difference over the segregated students.

2. Review of Literature -- Mainstream and Segregated Programs

Special educational facilities were first developed to provide for the education of children with physical, cognitive and emotional handicaps.

By 1963, 90% of all exceptional learners were receiving special classroom education. Alternatives to the special classrooms have been developed and implemented.

Berry (1974) describes three methods of mainstream programs:

1. reassignment,
2. prescription, and
3. organizational development.

The reassignment approach is simply to drop most pull-out programs and send children back to regular classrooms. Advantages were the apparent closer working relationship between special and regular teacher and the modeling effect of being in a regular classroom.

The prescription approach means that the special education teachers diagnose a learning problem and prescribe solutions for implementation of these diagnoses. The DPT (Diagnostic-Prescriptive Teacher) program involves ten steps from referral and observation to educational prescription based on the child's needs and abilities.

A third alternative mainstream program is that of organizational development. Organizational changes, according to Berry, can involve one of these areas:

1. task analysis
2. slip sessions
3. team teaching
4. multi-age grouping
5. learning centers
6. aids and/or
7. peer teaching.

This study's mainstream programs used the reassignment method of simply returning students from special classes to regular classrooms.